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when they have been blessed with a son.

3.18. We have pointed out above (3.16) that Badagas have some idea of a "safe period" at the end of the menstrual cycle, and they also believe the middle of the cycle is when conception occurs. Beyond this, however, there was no idea of contraception until public health officials recently began the family planning campaign. This advice, given out by government officials, for years fell on deaf ears because it was addressed to the men of the community. When I asked 420 Badaga adults of both sexes, in 1963, whether some form of birth control should be encouraged to improve village life, not a single person said Yes. In the late 1960s however the programme began to be more effective because illiterate old Badaga women pointed out to younger women the benefits of having fewer children. Intra-uterine devices seem to be the method most women favour; but some men have submitted to vasectomies, and women have sometimes been sterilized after a difficult delivery in hospital. I am unaware of any distribution of government-supplied contraceptives to Badaga men except during a very brief campaign nearly 20 years ago. Men are however encouraged to have vasectomies with the offer of free transportation to the hospital, 60 rupees, and a transistor radio. K. Sithamma said she disapproved of this programme because if a man's children should die once he has been sterilized he cannot have any more. In her view the only proper way to restrict births is to stop having coitus until another child is wanted; abstinence was seemingly often counselled to the poor. Whether a woman gets pregnant or remains barren is the will of God, and because a pregnancy is his gift abortion would be a sin. "You should build the house; God should give you children." Nonetheless one does hear of unmarried girls aborting by eating a lot of greasy chicken until they vomit, the stomach spasms sometimes having the desired effect. (Among the neighbouring Irula tribe a two-inch twig of swallow wort is reportedly placed in the vagina to bring about an abortion; Nambiar and Bharati 1965: 70).

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only giving birth to girls." Another states: "If a girl is begotten she is useless; if a boy is begotten he is an asset." Yet another proverb puts it thus: "Girls are a disappointment, but the eldest son is like a hearth." Daughters are accordingly cared for less well than sons during infancy, particularly if the couple already have several daughters. Nonethelesss there is no evidence of the female infanticide that used to be practised by Todas.

> The Badagas will welcome the birth of a son or a daughter with equal gladness. The most probable reason for this is that while Hindus see an increasing burden and expense with the hbirt of a daughter, the Badagas see a future livelihood because the daughter as well as the son helps in the fields. (Rhiem 1900: 503)

Even if they are a blessing, "One who has given birth is seven times as ill-fated as one who is without children:" they can be very troublesome!

If a child is deformed since before the birth, that is God's will and nothing can be done about it; but if any damage was done to the baby during the delivery, that can perhaps be rectified. Immediately after the delivery the midwife checks that all the limbs are in order, and at this time can squeeze the head to make it rounder if it seems very long, or can pinch up the nose if it looks flattened.

If a child is born deformed but living, it is believed that either its parents or its patrilineal ancestors committed some great sin; whereas if the deformed child is born dead no such sin was involved. Many Badagas are born with eleven fingers or toes; but this minor matter is considered to be neither lucky nor inauspicious. Badly deformed children of either sex are still encouraged to live and are not done away with; this is even more true of twins, who bring more respect to the parents than a single birth would. However, children blind or deformed from birth are extremely rare, and giants are unknown among the Badagas; dwarfs occasionally are found. One man, about a metre high, was briefly married and divorced, was a highly respected man who took an active part in the village council, and died in his sixties. He was nicknamed "Groundling" but was respected because his conduct was excellent and he came from a good family. He had several brothers of normal stature but was respected more than they were.